

Dr Neil Westphalen

MBBS (Adel), MPH, Dip AvMed, FRACGP, FACAsM,
FAFOEM, psc
Consultant Occupational and Environmental Physician
Commander, Royal Australian Navy Reserve

27 September 2018

Compensation and Rehabilitation for Veterans Inquiry

Productivity Commission
GPO Box 1428
CANBERRA ACT 2601

SUBMISSION – COMPENSATION AND REHABILITATION FOR VETERANS INQUIRY

Reference:

A. Telecon Dr Neil Westphalen / Mr Stewart Plain dated 27 Sep 18

Dear Sir/Madam,

As discussed at the Reference, this submission is forwarded for consideration by the Productivity Commission's Compensation and Rehabilitation for Veterans Inquiry.

By way of background, I graduated from Adelaide University in 1985 and joined the RAN in 1987 as a medical officer. I have since become a specialist in occupational and environmental medicine.

I am a RAN Staff Course graduate and a Fellow of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, the Australasian Faculty of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (part of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians), and the Australasian College of Aerospace Medicine. I also hold a Diploma of Aviation Medicine and a Master of Public Health.

Career-wise, my seagoing service includes HMA Ships *Swan*, *Stalwart*, *Success*, *Sydney*, *Perth* and *Choules*. My operational employments include DAMASK VII, RIMPAC 96, TANAGER, RELEX II, GEMSBOK, TALISMAN SABRE 07, RENDERSAFE 14, SEA RAIDER 15, KAKADU 16 and SEA HORIZON 17.

My service ashore includes clinical roles at *Cerberus*, *Penguin*, *Kuttabul*, *Albatross* and *Stirling*, and staff positions as J07 (Director Health) at the then HQAST, Director Navy Occupational and Environmental Health, Director of Navy Health, Joint Health Command SO1 MEC Advisory and Review Services, and Fleet Medical Officer (2013-2016), before transferring to the Active Navy Reserve in July 2016.

Since then, I started a series of articles for the *Australian Defence Force Journal* (ADFJ) and the *Journal of Military and Veteran's Health* (JMVH) on various aspects of the ADF's health services, in order to advocate an occupational health paradigm. Among other considerations, such a paradigm would incorporate rehabilitation services and facilitate compensation as a matter of course.

The articles published so far are:

- Westphalen, N. 'Occupational and environmental medicine in the Australian Defence Force', *Australian Defence Force Journal*, Issue 200, November-December 2016, pp. 49-58, [online] http://www.adfjournal.adc.edu.au/UserFiles/issues/200%202016%20Nov_Dec.pdf. Reprinted in *Journal of Military and Veteran's Health* January 2017 Vol 25 No 1 pp 44-52, [online] <http://jmvh.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/reprint.pdf>
- Westphalen, N. 'Primary Health Care in the Australian Defence Force', *Australian Defence Force Journal*, Issue 202, July 2017, pp. 91-96, [online] http://www.defence.gov.au/adc/adfi/Documents/issue_202/Westphalen_July_2017.pdf. Reprinted in *Journal of Military and Veteran's Health* Jul 2018 Vol 25 No 4 pp 84-89, [online] <http://jmvh.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/AMMA-JMVH-October-2017.pdf>
- Westphalen, N. 'Assessing medical suitability for employment and deployment in the Australian Defence Force', *Australian Defence Force Journal*, Issue 203, December 2017, pp. 67-74, [online] http://www.defence.gov.au/adc/adfi/Documents/issue_203/ADF%20Journal%20203_Article_Westphalen.pdf. Reprinted in *Journal of Military and Veteran's Health* Jul 2018 Vol 26 No 2 pp 42-48, [online] <http://jmvh.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/AMMA-JMVH-July-2018.pdf>

I respectfully suggest these articles provide useful background information that is at least indirectly germane to the Inquiry's deliberations. As they have been published, I am happy for them to appear on the Inquiry website.

I have also submitted another two articles to JMVH on rehabilitation and compensation in the ADF, for peer / editorial review prior to being published early next year. While they are directly relevant to the Inquiry's deliberations, I do **not** want them to appear on the Inquiry website until after they have been published in JMVH.

Finally, I would also like to bring to the Inquiry's attention the following websites:

- 'National Vocational Rehabilitation Policy', Royal Australasian College of Physicians [online] <https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/racp-national-vocational-rehabilitation-policy.pdf>, which advocates the development and implementation of such a policy. It is suggested that ADF compliance with such a document could provide some of the solutions being sought by the Inquiry.
- 'Health Benefits of Good Work', Royal Australasian College of Physicians [online] <https://www.racp.edu.au/advocacy/division-faculty-and-chapter-priorities/faculty-of-occupational-environmental-medicine/health-benefits-of-good-work>. The Health Benefits of Good Work (HBOGW) initiative is based on compelling evidence that good work is beneficial to people's health and wellbeing, and that long term work absence, work disability and unemployment generally have a negative impact on health and wellbeing. This website has links to a range of documents that are relevant to the Inquiry's deliberations. These issues directly pertain to the Inquiry.

For consideration. I am willing to answer queries.

Yours sincerely

Dr Neil Westphalen

MBBS (Adel), MPH, DAvMed, FRACGP, FACAsM, FAFOEM, psc
Commander, RANR

